

**YOUTH COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT:
TENNESSEE HIGH SCHOOL LEAVERS STUDY**

SPONSORED BY THE BUREAU OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE SERVICES

**CONDUCTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE
COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP**

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The University of Tennessee Knoxville, Community Health Research Group (UTK CHRG) and the Tennessee Department of Health, Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services are working together to provide comprehensive, accurate and useful scientific data on prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and abuse statewide and by region for use in program planning, needs assessment, evaluation and resource allocation. The initial component of the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) comprised a random sample telephone survey of 8,000 Tennessee adults ages 18 and over in 12 regions of Tennessee. Conducted by the UTK CHRG, this survey has generated a wealth of data, especially relevant for treatment and prevention needs assessment. This survey is called the Tennessee Alcohol and Other Drug Needs Assessment Survey (TAODNAS)

Extending the demographic coverage provided by the adult survey, the UTK CHRG is engaged in planning, organizing, pretesting and implementing a statewide survey of high school students concerning alcohol and other drug use and risk of abuse and problems. This second statewide survey will fulfill Federally mandated block grant data and needs assessment requirements. Set in the context of a health and lifestyles survey, the Tennessee Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs High School Survey will be completed by late 1995.

Preparatory to the large-scale high school student survey, a study of high school leavers was undertaken, providing a range of data, both primary and secondary, qualitative and quantitative. The major data collection for the study of high school leavers featured mall intercept and other face-to-face interviews with eligible youth (high school "dropouts" between the ages of 16 and 19 years) in both metropolitan and rural regions of Tennessee to provide data on this hard-to-reach and frequently neglected population group at potentially high risk of alcohol and other drug problems.

To set the context and guide development of hypotheses, the scientific literature was reviewed on high school leavers' characteristics, especially their alcohol and other drug use, abuse and problems. This helps us to determine what is known about AOD use among high school leavers and how such hard-to-reach youth have been studied by others. Additionally, the TAODNAS data were analyzed to ascertain the differences